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Paul F. Cunningham
Rivier College Nashua, NH

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Paul F. Cunningham
Rivier College
Nashua, NH, USA

Several substantial critiques remain a source of fractionalizing debate within transpersonal psychology, including the weakness of its definition, whether it is redundant with Wilber's integral psychology, whether it is a scientific field, whether it is too metaphysical, whether it neglects the problem of evil, and what contribution can it make to mainstream psychology. This article explicates these and related areas of critique and provides a response that identifies the essential challenges and future prospects of transpersonal psychology. The article also emphasizes the field's unique role as a potential bridge connecting psychological science with the transpersonal psyche in a way that can more fully recognize the importance of the latter.

Fractionalizing paradigm debates about the content of transpersonal psychology has led some scholars to question the field's relevance and viability as a psychology for the 21st century (Funk, 1994; Rothberg & Kelly, 1998; Washburn, 2003; Wilber, 2006, appendix 3). The purpose of this article is to join the continuing debate about the nature and character of transpersonal psychology by presenting what I consider to be the field's essential challenges, prospects, and promise, as well as to provide a partial, preliminary response to several substantive issues raised by critics of transpersonal psychology in recent years:

> What exactly is a transpersonal psychology?
>
> Is an exclusively psychological approach to the transpersonal sufficient or even necessary in light of Wilber's integral approach and the emergent field of transpersonal studies?
>
> Is transpersonal psychology a scientific field, and if so, what is its relationship to religion and other related disciplines such as parapsychology and anomalous psychology?
>
> Is transpersonal psychology too metaphysical? What kinds of ontological and epistemological assumptions are appropriate in transpersonal psychology, and do transpersonal experiences reveal actual transcendental realities?
>
> Does transpersonal psychology neglect the problem of evil in its celebration of the "farther reaches of human nature"?
>
> What effective contribution can an empirically-based transpersonal psychology make to mainstream psychology?

My goal is to assist the transpersonal community "articulate and embody the full range of its own vision" as advocated by Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (2007, p. 15) while keeping the field in connection with mainstream psychology instead of at its margins so that transpersonal psychology's unique role as a bridge connecting psychological science and transpersonal psyche can be more fully recognized, understood, and appreciated.

The answer to the problem of the fractionalizing paradigm debates within transpersonal psychology is not to forcibly translate the goals of transpersonal psychology into the theoretical language of the natural or social sciences or to impose "Great Chain of Being" philosophic concepts or similar theoretical models on our understanding of transpersonal development. The answer is also not to curtail our natural curiosity about the existence of transcendental realities, or restrict topics to be investigated to those amenable to laboratory demonstration. As Hilgard (1992) wrote in an article

with the telling title, Psychology as an Integrative Science versus a Unified One, "There is no point in forcing all interpretations to fit some standard or 'accepted' model" (p. 7). The same is true for transpersonal psychology.

What Is a Transpersonal Psychology?

Critique

One criticism of transpersonal psychology is that its multiplicity of definitions and the lack of operationalization of many of its terms have led to conceptual uncertainty about the content of the field. The fact that transpersonal psychology is not limited to any particular philosophy or worldview, does not limit research to a particular method, and does not limit inquiry to a particular domain has added to the confusion (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993a). The term "transpersonal psychology" is used differently by different theorists. As a result, the content of transpersonal psychology has come to mean different things to different people.

The careful textual analyses of the structure of implicit meanings in published definitions of transpersonal psychology have gone a long way to reduce conceptual confusion (e.g., Caplan, Hartelius, & Rardin, 2003; Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007; Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Shapiro, Lee, & Gross, 2002). Definitions are often highly theory-ladened and embedded with ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of a reality that makes transpersonal phenomena possible and ultimately knowable (or unknowable) by the conscious mind. A number of transpersonal scholars affirm the spiritual universalism of the "Perennial Philosophy" (Huxley, 1944/1970; Valle, 1989; Vaughn, 1986). Others choose a constructive "participatory" approach that grants the existence of as many spiritual realities as there are individuals who experience them (Ferrer, 2002). Various transpersonal researchers influenced by the psychology of Psychosynthesis affirm that a Transpersonal Self exists (Firman & Gila, 2002), while others influenced by the philosophy and psychology of Buddhism deny the reality of any such identity (Aronson, 2004). Some theorists posit the notion of a "Great Chain of Being" as comprising the essential structure of transpersonal development (Wilber, 1977, 1980), while others prefer Whiteheadian process philosophy as a framework for understanding the transpersonal (de Quincey, 2002; Griffin, 1988, 1997). Several transpersonal scholars take a purely agnostic position regarding the transpersonal realm (Friedman, 2002; Nelson, 1990), while others accept the ontological reality of the transcendent (Lancaster, 2004). Still others prefer to "leave the field open for surprises and new discoveries" (Grof, 1998, p. 114).

The inability of textual analysis to completely capture the nuances of such philosophic contexts within which published definitions are embedded may result in an incomplete or misleading understanding of intended meanings. Given the multiple and diverse perspectives regarding the nature and character of transpersonal experience and development (e.g., agnostic, gnostic, atheistic, theistic, naturalistic, supernaturalistic), is there any common ground that binds us all as transpersonalists, despite differences in metaphysics or worldview?

Response

Whatever philosophy or worldview transpersonal scholars may prefer, they can find common ground in their affirmation of four key ideas articulated in the Articles of Association for Transpersonal Psychology:

1. Impulses toward an ultimate state are continuous in every person.
2. Full awareness of these impulses is not necessarily present at any given time.
3. The realization of an ultimate state is essentially dependent on direct practice and on conditions suitable to the individual.
4. Every individual has the right to choose his [or her] own path. (Sutich, 1972, pp. 93-97)

Impulses toward an ultimate state are continuous in every person

The first key idea that defines a transpersonal orientation asserts that every being comes into existence with inner ideals and values that seek fulfillment and with impulses to fulfill or actualize these ideals through a process called "self-actualization" (Maslow, 1968, p. 25). Moreover, each being seeks the greatest possible fulfillment and extension of its own abilities and interior system of "Being-values" in a way that benefits not only the individual, but also helps the species to fulfill those particular qualities that are characteristic of it (Maslow, 1964, appendix G). This inner directedness toward ultimate or ideal states of health, self-expression, and value-fulfillment is considered to be "instinctoid"–innate, natural, and biologically necessary in order to achieve physical health and growth and psychological vitality, peace, and joy (Maslow, 1971, p. 316).

When unimpeded by negative conditioning, suggestion, or belief, these transpersonal impulses toward ideal states of knowing and being engender in the individual a sense of safety, assurance, and an expectation that needs will be satisfied, abilities actualized, and desires fulfilled. Such impulses are evident in the existence of heroic themes and ideals that pervade human cultural life, in excellent performance in any area of endeavor, and at those times when the individual suddenly feels at peace, instinctively a part of events from which one usually considers oneself apart, unexpectedly happy and content with one's daily life, or spontaneously experiences an event in which one seems to go beyond one's self. Such "peak experiences" are often considered to be religious or spiritual events by the individuals who have them (Maslow, 1964, p. 59).

Full awareness of these impulses is not necessarily present at any given time

The second key idea recognizes that negative expectations and beliefs, fears and doubts, when multiplied and hardened, can begin to diminish the individual's awareness of his or her natural impulses toward the "farther reaches of human nature" (Maslow, 1971). Intrusions of a creative nature (e.g., unusual ideas, memories, mental images, bodily feelings, and impulses) that originate from other dimensions of actuality may be initially frightening to the individual, considered to be alien or "not-self" and dangerous, perhaps even signs of mental disturbances, and thus are automatically shut out. Transpersonal impulses continue to operate beneath the surface of conscious awareness whether the person is aware of them or not, but the conscious self is no longer able to perceive its own greater fulfillment, uniqueness, or integrity. The person becomes blind to other attributes with which he or she is naturally gifted and to which the impulses are intended to lead. Communications from the marginal, subliminal realms of consciousness are then permitted to emerge into conscious awareness only during sleep, in dreams, or in instances of creative inspiration.

The realization of an ultimate state is essentially dependent on direct practice and on conditions suitable to the individual

The third key idea acknowledges that what is often needed to allow impulses toward ideal states of health, expression, and fulfillment to consciously emerge in daily life is not only a belief in their existence and an intense desire and expectation of their occurrence, but also a disciplined openness that permits their emergence. Belief and desire alone may not be enough to regain contact with ignored, overlooked, or denied impulses. Engaging in a disciplined spiritual practice such as insight meditation for a sufficient amount of time is often required to open what is closed, balance what is unbalanced, and reveal what is hidden (e.g., Kornfield, 1993). As the individual generates enough experiential data to counteract limited ideas of the nature of the psyche and its greater world, it becomes easier for the egotistically-oriented portions of the self to accept the possible existence of other streams of awareness and perception. As this occurs, the individual's ideas of his or her own private reality become changed and understanding of the unknown elements of the self becomes expanded. The limitations and blocks to one's natural, spontaneous impulses toward self-actualization and ideal development may then become removed. Once individuals acknowledge the existence of such impulses and learn to trust them, they will quite naturally be led to explore their meaning and move in the direction of their ideal development.

Every individual has the right to choose his [or her] own path

The fourth key idea recognizes the value-ladened character of existence and the significant importance of individual differences, free will, choice, and responsibility for one's choices. Actions, events, and circumstances that are worthwhile, desirable, and significant for one person may be meaningless to another because of individual differences in temperament, inclination, curiosity, training, education, past experience, and desire for knowledge. Individuals can choose among courses of action precisely because they are uniquely suited to sense what course of action will lead to their own probable development and fulfillment. In the creative field of probable actions and events, there is always more than one way to discover the vital reality of one's impulses toward ideal states and become acquainted with those deeply creative aspects of one's own being.

Is an Exclusively Psychological Approach to the Transpersonal Sufficient or Necessary?

Critique

A second criticism of transpersonal psychology is that since private transpersonal experiences occur in

the physical world of shared events, such experiences can never be adequately understood from a psychological standpoint alone. An exclusively psychological approach to the transpersonal can never be sufficient. Such an approach may even be unnecessary in light of Ken Wilber's (2000, 2006) integral approach to psychology and spirituality and the emergence of the field of transpersonal studies (Boucouvalas, 1999; Daniels, 2005, chap. 12; Walsh and Vaughn, 1993b). If "all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types. . . need to be included in any truly integral or comprehensive approach" (Wilber, 2006, p. 31) to the transpersonal, and if a multidisciplinary, multi-perspective approach to knowledge requires that transpersonal psychology be supplemented and ultimately integrated with other fields of knowledge (e.g., transpersonal studies), then in what sense can a purely psychological approach to the transpersonal ever be considered sufficient to justify transpersonal psychology's continued existence as a separate and discrete discipline?

Response

It is true that individual interior experience merges into collective public life and grows again outward toward the physical world, contributing and adding to that exterior reality of which it is a part. The continuum of existence holds it (and us) all together. It is also true that "all quadrants, all levels" (Wilber, 2006, p. 26) arise and coalesce together in quite a natural fashion from psychic (in the Jungian sense) elements of human consciousness that are as necessary for them as sun, air, earth, and water are to plants. Society is within each member of the human species; without society's source–the individual human psyche–society would not last a moment. The survival of our society, culture, and civilization is literally dependent upon the spiritual or psychic condition of the individual, which en masse constructs, maintains, and grows the collective cultural stance of our civilization.

Ever since its beginning, transpersonal psychology has explored the spiritual nature and character of a psychodynamically active human psyche. Hypothetical constructs such as "spirit," "soul," or "psyche" are used interchangeably in the transpersonal literature to express the greater portions of our being as a species. These terms remain meaningless notions except as they relate to the individual spirit, psyche, or soul that can be used as a frame of reference. An exclusively psychological approach to the transpersonal is thus necessary in order to sufficiently emphasize the importance of the individual and his or her power to form private and public events. Then transpersonal studies is ready to show how the magnification of individual reality combines and enlarges to form the fabric of collective realities such as the sudden rise or overthrow of governments, the birth of new religions, and the appearance of innovative technology (or our species' more shadow-like collective creations such as mass murders in the form of wars or mass suicides in the form of deadly epidemics). The individual does not simply encounter these events nor are they merely thrust upon him or her. They are the result of individual thoughts, expectations, and feelings that merge with those of others to give rise to those collective events in the creative field of probable actions in which individuals directly or indirectly participate (Needleman & Baker, 1978; Roberts, 1981a; Tarnas, 1991). All quadrants–self and consciousness, brain and organism, culture and worldview, social system and environment–must be considered in the far greater context of consciousness which is their source if an adequate understanding of the transpersonal is to be obtained (Cobb & Griffin, 1977; de Quincey, 2002; Roberts, 1977, 1979a).

Is Transpersonal Psychology a Scientific Field?

Critique

A third criticism of transpersonal psychology is that it is an unscientific, irrational approach–the product of undisciplined thinking by a group of extravagant, mystically-oriented professionals (Ellis & Yeager, 1989). While theologians refuse to give the soul any psychological characteristics, mainstream psychologists refuse to grant its existence, and anyone who experiences "something that cannot exist" is to be regarded as delusional or mentally ill. Beliefs in the existence of the soul and life after death, mental healing, and out-of-body experiences, precognition and telepathy, and other "anomalous" experiences are viewed as a sign of psychopathology or emotional instability, a relic of magical thinking, the result of a cognitive deficit, or a delusion cast up by the irrational areas of the subconscious–if the existence of the subconscious is acknowledged at all.

Transpersonal theory and psychotherapy may be theoretically fascinating and creatively valid, but are seen as dealing essentially with "non-information" and thus do not contain statements about any kind of scientifically valid, hard-bed reality (Ellis & Yeager,

1989; Kurtz, 1991; Shermer, 2002). The claims of transpersonal psychologists (e.g., our essential nature is spiritual, consciousness creates form and not the other way around, contacting a deeper source of wisdom and guidance within is possible and helpful to personal growth) run directly counter to much contemporary thought and are regarded as scientific error or heresy as far as orthodox Western psychology is concerned (e.g., Tart, 1975, chap. 2). The existence of any phenomena that implies the possibility of mind affecting matter and any psychology or philosophy that brings these into focus is to be vigorously opposed. If not repudiated, such unofficial elements of the mind that appear to contradict intelligence and reason, logical thought and objectivity would threaten the legitimacy of psychology as a scientific discipline and shatter the philosophic foundations of psychology itself (Coon, 1992).

A related criticism pertains to the methodological difficulties concerning transpersonal psychology's scientific status. The field appears to be largely founded on theory, experience, and belief with few objective tests of its theories. As one transpersonal psychologist put it:

> Transpersonal psychology has never developed a coherent scientific frame of reference, and despite numerous attempts to adequately define it (e.g., Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Walsh & Vaughn, 1993), still suffers from serious ambiguity regarding its scope and appropriate methodology. As a result, little progress in understanding transpersonal psychological phenomena from a scientific perspective has occurred since the founding of the field. (Friedman, 2002, p. 175)

Another problem is that the strength, vitality, and worth of transpersonal phenomena and our understanding of them have been greatly undermined by distortions, negative ideas, superstition, fanaticism, and some sheer nonsense (Child, 1985; Gardner, 1957, 1991; Sagan, 1996).

Response

Transpersonal psychology is scientific in the Aristotelian sense (scientia) in that it seeks knowledge through causes–material, efficient, formal, and final. It is scientific in the Jamesian sense in that it bases its conclusions upon empirical data obtained by "direct experience" (empiricus) from 1st-2nd-3rd person points of view. It is scientific in the methodological sense in that it uses the disciplined inquiry of scientific methodology in its study of exceptional human experiences and transformative behaviors, including: problem identification, literature review, hypothesis construction, operational definition, research design, methodologies for the observation, control, manipulation, and measurement of variables, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and public communication and evaluation of results in peer-reviewed journals and at national and international conferences.

The broad definitional themes of transpersonal psychology–"highest or ultimate potential," "phenomena beyond the ego," "human transformation and transcendence," "transcendent states of consciousness," "psychospiritual development," "integrative/holistic psychology"–may all sound quite esoteric, but they refer to highly practical experiences and behaviors. In certain terms we are dealing with the very nature of creativity itself, as correctly understood by Maslow (1968, 1971). Exceptional human experiences and transformative behaviors can be considered to be expansions and extensions of normal creativity and natural kinds of phenomena that, like other natural events, can be studied by conventional methods of scientific inquiry (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Gowan, 1974; Murphy & Donovan, 1997; Palmer & Braud, 2002).

In addition, transpersonal researchers use a variety of innovative methods of human inquiry that are "as creative and expansive as the subject matter we wish to investigate" (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 4), and can include creative expression, direct knowing, dream and imagery work, integral inquiry, intuitive inquiry, meditation, organic research, storytelling, and transpersonal-phenomenological inquiry (Hart, Nelson, & Puhakka, 2000; Palmer, 1998). Non-experimental evidence remains an extremely valuable source of information concerning the nature and limits of transpersonal experience and transformative behavior (Braude, 1997; Coles, 1990; Miller & C'de Baca, 2001; Murphy, 1992; O'Regan & Hirshberg, 1993). Many transpersonal abilities and capacities can be adequately understood only in their natural setting, which is why William James's (1902/1936) *Varieties of Religious Experiences* is such a rich source of insight and understanding into dramatic forms of religious behavior and attitudes. Methodologically, I advocate a methodological pluralism (Faulconer & Williams, 1985, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1983) "that is not to be equated

with theoretical eclecticism" and in which "our choice of methods [is] based on the nature of the problem we are investigating" (Slife & Williams, 1995, pp. 200, 204).

What Is Transpersonal Psychology's Relationship to Religion, Parapsychology, and Other Related Disciplines?

Grof (1985), a co-founder of transpersonal psychology, states that "what truly defines the transpersonal orientation is a model of the human psyche that recognizes the importance of the spiritual or cosmic dimensions and the potential for consciousness evolution" (p. 197). This means transpersonal psychology recognizes that humanity is by nature spiritual. Personality psychologist Allport (1955/1969) regarded the "religious sentiment" in its function of "relating the individual meaningfully to the whole of Being" (p. 98) as one of our strongest traits as a species, yet the part of our psyche most often overlooked by mainstream psychology.

Some transpersonal scholars consider the strong scientific evidence for psi functioning (e.g., Broughton, 1992; Edge, Morris, Rush, & Palmer, 1986; Krippner, 1977-1997; Murphy, 1992; Radin, 1997; Rao, 2001; Wolman, 1985) as providing general support for the reality of a spiritual world and a basic firm groundwork for showing how the soul's abilities in life might display themselves (Braude, 2003; Myers, 1903; Osis & Haraldsson, 1997; Schwartz & Simon, 2002; Tart, 1997).

> Parapsychological phenomena provide essential grounds for believing in and validating religious experience and in so doing we find in parapsychology the necessary interface between science and religion. (Rao, 1997, p. 70)

Transpersonal psychology and parapsychology, in these terms, share the same objectives.

Lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, psi-related experiences (precognition, clairvoyance, psychokinesis), past-life experiences, near-death experiences, spiritual healing experiences, and mystical experience are considered anomalous phenomena by mainstream psychology because of artificial divisions established within psychology itself between what is common and uncommon, possible and impossible, normal and abnormal, real and unreal (Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000). They are also ancient psychological phenomena that have been a part of humanity's existence for as long as history has been recorded, reported and witnessed for centuries by quite normal people; accounts of such occurrences having been expressed by many cultures and religions from the past and continuing into the present (Hay, 2006; Newport & Strasberg, 2001). They are at least indications that the quality of life, mind, identity, and consciousness are more mysterious than is presently comprehended by mainstream psychology.

Is Transpersonal Psychology Too Metaphysical?

Critique

A fourth criticism of transpersonal psychology is that it has become too metaphysical in its concepts and theorizing. Its psychological theories are regarded as the most speculative of philosophies and foster an irrational belief in divine beings (Ellis & Yeager, 1989). Transpersonal scholars such as Assagioli (1965), Grof (1985), James (1902/1936), Lancaster (2004) and Wilber (1977) who use metaphysical concepts as a framework for understanding the nature and character of transpersonal experiences, allegedly claim to validate the existence of what cannot be empirically verified. William James (1902/1936), for example, believed that

> the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in the world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality. . . . But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we have no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal. . . . God is real since he produces effects. (pp. 506-507)

Critics assert that quite satisfactory explanations of experiences "beyond ego" can be offered without positing the existence of an ontological reality outside the physical and psychological one (Daniels, 2005; Friedman, 2002; Maslow, 1964). As Carl G. Jung put it:

> The fact that metaphysical ideas exist and are believed in does nothing to prove the actual existence of their content or of the object they refer to…. (Jung, 1968, p. 34)

> Psychology treats all metaphysical claims as mental phenomena, and regards them as statements about the mind and its structure that derive ultimately from certain unconscious dispositions…. (Jung, 1992, pp. 48-49)

Mystics are people who have a particularly vivid experience of the processes of the collective unconscious. A mystical experience is experience of the archetypes. (Jung, 1935, p. 218)

Furthermore, any expectation or presupposition that a transpersonal experience reveals the actual existence of a real transcendental reality biases scientific understanding and limits openness to alternative interpretations of the phenomenal facts (Daniels, 2005, chap. 10). Nelson expressed this well, as follows:

> Ontological assumptions (such as the objective empirical reality of science or the divine of many religions) often force the direction of the research and thus pre-draw conclusions. In effect, neutrality requires that we suspend. . . as far as possible, all assumptions vis-à-vis the ultimate nature of things and events of our world and return to the empiricism of our direct experience. (1990, p. 36)

In other words, if transpersonal psychology is to remain a scientific field and not turn into a branch of philosophy or theology, then we must restrict ourselves solely to a phenomenological study of its "pure" experiential aspects, and adopt an agnostic point of view toward all experiences of the transpersonal, avoiding as far as possible all ontological references, interpretations, speculations, or hypotheses about the nature of transcendental realities (if they exist) beyond the physical or psychological one.

Response

We may divorce ontology from epistemology in thought, but they remain united and undivided in experience and in nature (Watts, 1963). Behind every method of inquiry, every research finding, and every scientific theory are hidden metaphysical assumptions–ontological and epistemological assumptions–about the nature of the physical world and psychological realms and the way in which human beings understand them (Burtt, 1932; Harman & Clark, 1994; Slife & Williams, 1995). These embedded assumptions and implications are seldom verbalized or questioned, but all experiences presuppose them, all understanding is built upon them, and all judgments are grounded in them (Lonergan, 1959). Moreover,

> the desire to be open-minded may lead people to think that they have avoided biases, when all that they have really avoided are the biases that they are aware of–the nonhidden ideas. . . . Ideas guide our actions, enrich our understandings, and fill gaps in our less-than-complete knowledge of the issues involved. In this sense of open-mindedness, then, a strategy that is supposedly free from bias is not only impossible, it is undesirable. . . . All that is required is that scientists be open to alternative explanations, be honest, and reserve judgment about what is 'actually' going on. (Slife & Williams, 1995, p. 9)

The idea that we are somehow able to experience something as it is prior to interpretation is an epistemological assumption not strongly supported by research of modern cognitive psychology (Matlin, 2005). We naturally and spontaneously interpret phenomenon and any symbolic meaning it may have in light of our beliefs of good and evil, the possible and the impossible, what is normal and abnormal, real and unreal. Otherwise, the experience will have little or no meaning to the physically-oriented self.

> In this sense, data can never be facts until they have been given an interpretation that is dependent on ideas that do not appear in the data themselves" (Slife & Williams, 1995, p. 6).

Beliefs and intents, interests and desires serve as organizational processes that screen out certain information, causing us to perceive from the available field of energy certain data unconsciously selected in useful ways in accordance with our ideas of what reality is. Knowledge informs and influences all perceptual, memory, and cognitive processes. In fact, it is the character of the knowledge provided during transpersonal experiences that is often considered the most self-validating part of the experience (Ferrer, 2002; Hastings, 1991).

What Kinds of Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions Are Appropriate in Transpersonal Psychology?

If we cannot escape from metaphysics in our theories and interpretation of experience, then what kinds of ontological and epistemological assumptions are appropriate to a scientific psychology that calls itself transpersonal? Ontologically, the ever-actual integrity of psychological experiences (mind) and the natural world (matter) cannot be denied. Conceptual distinctions can be made between individual psyche and transcendental realities without presupposing the sort of ontological

divisions set up by Descartes. Without advocating a return to an unmodified Cartesianism with its notion of mind and matter as ontologically distinct "substances," a case can be made for some sort of interactive dualism in which the duality that we perceive between us and the environment, between mind and body, is artificial and a productive function of our brain, physical senses, and focus of consciousness (Bergson, 1908/1991; Butts, 1997a, 1997b; James, 1898/1900; Kelly, Kelly, Crabtree, Gauld, Grosso, & Greyson, 2007; Myers, 1903; Stapp, 2005). As mystic and writer Roberts once put it:

> Do not think of the mind as a purely mental entity and of the body as a purely physical one. Instead, think of both mind and body as continuing, interweaving processes that are mental and physical at once. Your thoughts actually are quite as physical as your body is, and your body is quite as nonphysical as it seems to you your thoughts are. You are actually a vital force, existing as part of your environment, and yet apart from your environment at the same time. (cited in Butts, 1997b, p. 131)

According to modern physical theory (quantum physics), consciousness plays an essential role in the construction and maintenance of physical reality as a Tertium Quid that transduces energy into matter by translating highly sophisticated and complex probability fields of oscillating, ever moving, highly charged gestalts of electromagnetic energy into physical objects in a universe in which matter, energy, and consciousness ultimately merge (Bohm, 1980; Friedman, 1994; 1997; Roberts, 1981a, 1981b; Stapp, 2004). Extending this idea further, we can say that humans are not alone in constructing, projecting, and maintaining their own physical image and the physical properties of the physical universe in this way.

More generally, consciousness can be hypothesized to be the force behind matter (panpsychism), forming other realities besides the physical one with different root assumptions, laws, properties, and characteristics, and requiring different modes of perception for us to become aware of their existence. By altering the focus of our consciousness and tuning into other fields of actuality, we enter other levels of reality quite as native to our psyche as normal waking consciousness. Furthermore, we can argue for a permissive or transmissive (as opposed to productive) function of the brain "as the organ which somehow constrains, regulates, restricts, limits, and enables or permits expression of the mind in its full generality" and the psyche as having "the kind of internal organization and dynamics assigned to it by Myers and James that may under various circumstances be able to function in some manner on its own" (Kelly, et. al., 2007, p. 608).

The phenomenological solidity, stability, and individuality of physical objects and events has been shown to be the camouflage form that reality takes within three-dimensional systems when perceived by our physical senses, but containing within it a much greater reality–the vitality that gives objects and events their form. The senses fabricate physical reality and see solid objects that are not solid at all but, rather, the result of perceptive patterns determined by psychological structures that are a function of our state of consciousness (Tart, 1983). Like a dream that seems real in the dreaming state of consciousness, so the physical universe and its percepts seem real to our waking state of consciousness, being a property of that state. This does not mean that physical reality is false or that this is the only reality there is. It is the only reality that we can perceive with the physical senses.

Moreover, there is no real division between the perceiver and the thing seemingly perceived. The physical world rises up before our eyes, while being a part of the world it perceives–composed of the same "stuff" as all other matter in the universe. Environments are not separate, objective, conglomerations of things in themselves that exist independently of consciousness, but always in relationship to consciousness, with constant interchanges of energy continually occurring between the body and the environment, maintaining balances, filling in patterns, with energy taking certain forms each less physical than the next. The lines between inner and outer do not exist in actuality any more than a line exists between conscious and unconscious. These fields or domains intermingle.

Sensation and perception are actions that produce effects and perform a function. The observer and object perceived (noesis and noema) are a part of the same event, each changing the other. This is well expressed by Butts (1997b): "Subjective continuity never fails in that it is always a part of the world it perceives, so that you and the world create each other, in those terms" (p. 33). Reality is not rigid, but plastic, existing within a vast field of probabilities. A flower not only appears different, but is different to the microbe, ant, bee, bird, and human who perceives it. Each perceives the reality of the flower through a set of high specialized receptors that force each

kind of consciousness to translate an available field of energy into a physical perception that is one of an infinite number of ways of perceiving the various guises through which the flower expresses itself. The consciousness of the flower would perceive its own reality from an entirely different focus.

Do Transpersonal Experiences Reveal Actual Transcendental Realities?

Epistemologically, I advocate the middle way of critical realism, an approach that bridges the non-realist position ("There is nothing out there") and the naive realist position ("The already out there now is real"). There is something out there, but the form that something takes is influenced by the perceptive mechanisms and conceptual schemas one happens to have operative at the time (Hick, 1999; Roberts, 1975, 1976). According to the critical realist principle,

> there are realities external to us, but we are never aware of them as they are in themselves, but always as they appear to us with our particular cognitive machinery and conceptual resources. . . . Religious experiences, then, occur in many different forms, and the critical realist interpretation enables us to see how they may nevertheless be different authentic responses to the Real. (Hick, 1999, pp. 41-42)

As St. Thomas Aquinas once put it: "Cognita sunt in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis" or "Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower" (quoted in Hick, 1999, p. 43).

A critical realist interpretation of a transpersonal experience (e.g., intuitive and revelatory knowledge far beyond [trans] the boundaries of an individual's personal self that springs into existence to expand the person's conscious knowledge and experience) would propose that quite legitimate and valid psychological experiences of basically independent, alternate realities become clothed in the garb of very limited conventional images and ideas of the personality who must interpret the information he or she receives. The transpersonal event becomes altered to some extent, reflected through the percipient's own nature as it expresses itself through the individual's psyche. The transpersonal action or event (e.g., the apparition at Medjugorie) is a reality in an inner order of events that can only be stated symbolically in the outer three-dimensional physical one. Like a round peg trying to fit a square hole, the resulting translation gives us events squeezed out of shape to some degree as one kind of reality is superimposed over another. Information from the inner order is interpreted in terms of the outer one, even though the phenomenon's own reality might exist in different terms entirely. Any transpersonal action that is perceived is thus only a portion of the true dimensionality of that event.

Roberts (1977, 1979a) would likely agree with Ferrer's (2002) description of mystical consciousness as "an ocean with many shores" (p. 147). Spiritual knowing, in her view, is a participatory affair between the individual and the universe, viewed through one's own unique vision–valid, experiential, and "not therefore unreal, but one of the appearances that reality takes" (Roberts, 1979a, p. 398). Why should we be concerned or worried, she asks, if our private visions and unique understandings of "the higher part of the universe" do not agree (James, 1902/1936, p. 507)? If we expect photographs of our own exterior physical world to differ according to where we go, why should we expect or require all of the "pictures" of interior transcendent realities to look alike? Any particular individual's experience is simply one of an infinite number of ways of perceiving the various guises through which the transcendental reality expresses itself. On this view, for every perception, other perceptions are possible and an event is never fully disclosed in one perception. Each transpersonal experience reveals a different aspect of transpersonal reality. There are as many spiritual realities as there are individuals who experience them–a metaphysical position that William James called "noetic pluralism" (Taylor, 1996, p. 134) and Jorge Ferrer (2002) called "participatory spirituality."

Does Transpersonal Psychology Ignore the Problem of Evil?

Critique

A fifth criticism of transpersonal psychology is that it tries to "leap across" the dark side of human nature (May, 1986), identifying itself with the more positive aspects of human nature while downplaying its "shadow" side (Zweig & Abrams, 1991). A related criticism is that transpersonal psychology is much too Pollyannaish in its view of transpersonal development, and ignores what is referred to as "the problem of evil." There is also the criticism that transpersonal psychology tends to overly focus on the exotic delights of enlightenment instead of the mundane difficulties of everyday life, the actualized

self instead of the sinful self, peak experiences rather than depths of despair, ecstasy instead of agony--all of which allegedly promote narcissism and spiritual materialism, or sustain the egotistically-oriented self rather than transform it (Daniels, 2005, chap. 4).

Response

From its beginning, transpersonal psychology has addressed the hidden power of the "dark side" of human nature. Jung (1875-1961), whose "work in the transpersonal realm prefigured much of what is current in the field" (Scotton, 1996, p. 39), was one of the first transpersonally-oriented psychiatrists to elucidate the influence of shadow-like elements of the psyche for mainstream psychology. Modern transpersonal psychology recognizes the existence of many factors that have contributed to the very definite troubles current in our human cultural world today, including "metapathologies" (Maslow, 1971), "existential vacuums" (Frankl, 1967), "psychological crises and disturbances" (Assagioli, 1965), "spiritual emergencies" (Grof & Grof, 1989), "primal wounds" (Firman & Gilman, 2002), and "spiritual illusions" (Vaughn, 1995). A variety of transpersonally-oriented psychotherapies have been developed to help people cope with the negative emotions accompanying the existential realities of death, guilt, and suffering and personal difficulties that are a part of life's normal domestic ups and downs (Boorstein, 1996; Cortright, 1997; Rowan, 1993; Scotton, Chinen, & Battista, 1996; Walsh & Shapiro, 1983). No one lives in a state of perpetual bliss for that is not the nature of existence. No problems mean no growth, and no growth means no self-actualization. Human nature is not a finished product, but the sort of consciousness meant to change, evolve, and develop.

Distorted ideas and beliefs that stress a sense of meaninglessness, purposelessness, powerlessness, unworthiness, and danger give rise to those conditions that are less than ideal in our world today. By persuading people to disregard and ignore authoritative beliefs, no matter what their source, about the species' "accidental origin," "killer instincts," "unsavory unconscious," "disease-prone body," and "sinful self," transpersonal psychology frees the intellect of negative, hampering beliefs that strain the individual's sense of biological integrity and shrink the area of psychological safety that is necessary to maintain a humane world. By concentrating upon those inbred, positive attitudes, feelings, and beliefs that constantly improve our sense of well-being, strength, and fulfillment (e.g., the worth of the individual, the species' basic good intent, the importance of individual action, the responsibility to be oneself, the constructive nature of impulses, the creativity of being, the purpose and meaning of life), transpersonal psychology "balances the equation," so to speak. By opening up avenues of expression that increase one's sense of worth and power, individuals become more likely to take steps in their own lives to express their ideals in whatever way is given them. They are better able to assess their abilities clearly so as to be consciously wise enough to choose from among the myriad of probable futures the most promising actions and events that will add to individual fulfillment and to the development of society.

The problem is that many theories of transpersonal development teach us to search for some remote inner transcendent spiritual self that we can trust and look to for help and support, while distrusting and shoving aside the mundane, physically-embodied ego that we have such intimate contact with on a daily basis (Kornfield, 2000). Setting up unnecessary and arbitrary divisions between portions of the self, we are told to get rid of the egotistically-oriented portions of our personality with all of the impulses and desires that direct our behavior in the world in favor of some idealized, detached, disinterested, desireless, egoless state of being located at the top of some remote and practically unreachable rung in the Great Chain of Being.

Spiritual advancement is hindered by such limited and limiting beliefs about the nature of the outer ego whose clear and exquisite focus creates a given kind of experience that is valid, real, and necessary to the life of the physical body. The ego hampers the self's natural inclinations because it has been trained to do so through social and cultural conditioning. The ego is far more flexible, resilient, curious, creative, and eager to learn than generally supposed and is quite capable of allowing freedom to the inner self's intuitions and impulses toward ideal states so that some knowledge of its own greater dimensions can indeed be communicated to this most-physically oriented portion of the personality. The ego is not something that needs to be overthrown in order to reach the transpersonal self. In fact, to do so can create imbalance and psychopathology in the personality (Bragdon, 1990). The life of the outer ego takes place within, not apart from, the framework of the psyche's greater existence. The transpersonal self speaks through

one's most intimate impulses and desires, one's smallest gestures and greatest ideals. The ego is not inferior to other portions of the self, in other words. It is supported, sustained, and filled with the same universal energy and vitality that composes its source. The ego can hardly be inferior to what composes it or to the reality of which it is a necessary and vital part. Spiritual knowledge, understanding, and wisdom is the natural result of this sense of self-unity.

What Effective Contribution Can an Empirically-based Transpersonal Psychology Make to Mainstream Psychology?

Transpersonal psychology as a psychology of the spiritual aspects of the human psyche makes a unique contribution to the discipline of psychology by serving as a bridge that connects mainstream psychological science and transpersonal psyche or spirit. How is this actually being achieved or might be achieved in the future?

The basic firm groundwork of transpersonal psychology and its primary contributions to mainstream psychology lie in (a) its acknowledgement of impulses toward ultimate or ideal states of health, self-expression, and fulfillment, (b) its broadening of "official" concepts about the self, human potential, and abilities, (c) its recognition of the interdependence of individual minds and the availability of superior inner knowledge in dreams, psi experiences, and states of creative inspiration, and (e) its acknowledgement of the existence of basically independent, alternate realities that can be known through a broad range of focuses of consciousness. By drawing attention to the existence of dimensionally greater areas of the psyche, transpersonal psychology encourages contemporary psychological perspectives to consider all creatures and all creation in a greater context with greater motives, purposes, and meanings than usually assigned to them.

Transpersonal psychology serves as a bridge between two worlds of experience. One is the familiar and ordinary world of experience of which we are consciously aware and that is studied by mainstream psychologists. The other world of experience–hallucinatory experiences, lucid dreaming, out of body experiences, psi-related experiences, past-life experiences, near-death experiences, spiritual healing experiences, mystical experience, channeling and mediumistic experiences, alternate states of consciousness–seems to escape the notice of most mainstream psychologists. It may appear as if transpersonal psychology leaves far behind the familiar, ordinary, normal, and usual experiences and behaviors of everyday life to pursue the strange, esoteric, weird, and anomalous contents of this other world. Actually the familiar and ordinary is discovered to be even more precious, more real, illuminated both within and without by the rich fabric of an "unknown reality emerging from the most intimate portions of daily life" (Roberts, 1977, 1979a, 1979b).

For instance, transpersonal psychology takes into account the psyche's vast creativity and ability to perceive and use information that comes from interior sources. Transpersonal experiences that occur through a dream, an out-of-body experience, a psi experience, a state of inspiration, or an alternate state of consciousness allows perception, memory and cognition to enrich its activities and alter its usual organization, providing the individual feedback and learning experiences not otherwise available in the physical environment itself. These experiences help the individual sense other subliminal streams of consciousness and realize that a fuller waking experience is possible. By hinting at dimensions of awareness usually unavailable to us, such experiences allow the human personality to enlarge its perceptions enough to take advantage of other portions of its own identity, and thereby encounter waking experience in a fresher fashion. Waking behavior and experience can then be judged against a more developed and higher understanding than currently present in contemporary psychological perspectives.

Contemporary psychological perspectives--psychoanalytic, behavioral, cognitive, biological, evolutionary, sociocultural, and humanistic-existential--have each contributed much to humanity's development. They are now at a stage where they must expand their definitions of reality and consciously consider facts that they have allowed themselves to ignore, overlook, or deny (e.g., the end does not justify the means; the activity of the brain is not the power behind the brain; the interior environment is as real as the exterior one; vast cooperative processes of nature, not competitive ones, gave us physical life and connect each species with every other) (Harman & Clark, 1994; Tart, 1975, chap. 2). It is ironic that the basis of the scientific method, the framework behind all organized systems of science and theories of psychology, and all notions of objectivity emerge from and depend upon a subjective reality that is not considered valid by the very psychological

science that is formed through its auspices. Mainstream psychology is capable of much more and will expand as it becomes more acquainted with transpersonal ideas and discovers that "its net of evidence is equipped only to catch certain kinds of fish, and that it is constructed of webs of [ontological and epistemological] assumptions that can only hold certain varieties of reality, while others escape its net entirely" (Roberts, 1981b, p. 137).

As long as transpersonal psychology serves to show that the age-old notion of a soul that arises from deeper multidimensional spiritual realities has not died out everywhere in psychology or become a mere fossil left over from premodern religion, the field will remain vital and relevant to mainstream psychology. By examining the idea of an autonomous psyche or soul in an unprejudiced way and testing its empirical justification in experience, transpersonal psychology keeps spirituality in connection with the rest of psychological science, and psychology in connection with the psyche or soul. Moreover, its influence will grow because behind (and beyond, trans) the themes that define it, the subject matter it studies, the history it embodies, the perspective it provides, the research it conducts, and the goals it seeks to achieve lies the unending reality of our species' inner source that transpersonal psychology strives to help each individual explore and express.

In the great sweeping cultural, religious, and technological changes that are abroad in our world today, the psyche–its human expression–is constructing and projecting greater images of our own probable fulfillment. In certain terms, transpersonal concepts act as symbols of intuitive insight and transmitters for those impulses toward "higher" stages of development that arise from the deeper dimensions of our species' nature, and that operate as a kind of spiritual blueprint to give conscious direction and stimulation to our development. Seemingly outside the mainstream, transpersonal psychology is meant to lead the discipline of psychology into its greatest areas of fulfillment. The promise and hopeful outcome is that in its attempt to reshape our understanding of the psyche's spiritual determinants, transpersonal psychology helps mainstream psychology become the true logos of the human psyche that Allport envisioned it to be.

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About the Author

Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D., received his B.A. degree in philosophy from Our Lady of Providence Seminary in 1971, M.S. degree in educational psychology from Purdue University in 1975, and Ph.D. in general/experimental psychology from the University of Tennessee in 1986. A full-time, tenured faculty member since 1986, he currently serves as chair of the Division of Applied, Natural, and Technological Sciences at Rivier College in Nashua, NH. Having served as treasurer of Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals from 1994-1996, and member of the American Psychological Association since 1986, Professor Cunningham was elected 44th President of the New England Psychological Association in 2003. He has published mainly on the assessment of educational (student) outcomes in higher education, animal use in psychology experiments, and student choice policies in the college classroom. He has taught an undergraduate course on transpersonal psychology at Rivier College since 1989 and is currently writing an introductory textbook about transpersonal psychology for use in the college classroom.